

Introduction

In a letter appended to his *Apology for Actors* (1612), Thomas Heywood allows us a rare glimpse of Shakespeare's inner life. In the third edition of a miscellany called *The Passionate Pilgrim*, which had been published earlier the same year, the printer William Jaggard had added certain pieces from Heywood's *Troia Britannica* (1608) to the poems present in the first two editions. Yet, far from acknowledging Heywood's authorship, the title page describes the collection as "newly corrected and augmented. By W. Shakespeare." Shakespeare does not seem to have been amused. He was, Heywood tells us, "much offended with M. *Jaggard* (that altogether vnknowne to him) presumed to make so bold with his name."¹ Shakespeare may well have taken the matter further. Of the two extant copies of the 1612 *Passionate Pilgrim*, only one bears Shakespeare's name on the title page, while the other copy omits it. Shakespeare's displeasure seems to have been

¹ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, 1612), G4^v. Heywood's letter has often been misunderstood and deserves to be quoted at some length:

Here likewise, I must necessarily insert a manifest iniury done me in that worke, by taking the two Epistles of *Paris to Helen*, and *Helen to Paris*, and printing them in a lesse volume, vnder the name of another, which may put the world in opinion I might steale them from him; and hee to doe himselfe right, hath since published them in his owne name: but as I must acknowledge my lines not worthy his [Shakespeare's] patronage, vnder whom he [Jaggard] hath publisht them, so the Author [Shakespeare] I know much offended with M. *Jaggard* (that altogether vnknowne to him) presumed to make so bold with his name. (G4^{r-v})

Heywood had first published the said Epistles in his *Troia Britannica* of 1608. Since they appeared in 1612 in a volume ascribed to Shakespeare, Heywood is worried that readers will mistakenly assume that these Epistles had been unrightfully included in Heywood's earlier volume. A further mistaken inference, Heywood fears, would be that their real author, Shakespeare, "to doe himselfe right," included them in his *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1612. As *The Passionate Pilgrim* contains Shakespeare's Sonnets 138 and 144, several scholars who failed to recognize that the phrase "and hee to doe himselfe right, hath since published them in his owne name" is syntactically subordinated to "may put the world in opinion," have mistakenly believed that Heywood is referring to Shakespeare's publication of his sonnets in 1609. See, for instance, Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, The Arden Shakespeare (Walton-on-Thames, Surrey: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 2–3.

such that he requested a new title page for the unsold copies, from which Jaggard removed his name (see [Figures 1 and 2](#)).²

This incident presents us with a picture of an unfamiliar Shakespeare: keenly aware of what is and what is not his literary property, concerned about his reputation, proud of his name and unwilling to have it associated with lines that did not flow from his pen. The Shakespeare we are familiar with is in many ways a different figure. Building upon his article for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Sidney Lee, in his influential biography, was instrumental in promoting the image of a Shakespeare unconscious of the quality of his work and largely uninterested in it beyond its “serving the prosaic end of providing permanently for himself and his daughters.”³ Many biographies have followed since, and few have entirely endorsed Lee’s portrait of Shakespeare as a money grabber. Yet what has remained largely unchanged in our view of Shakespeare is that he allegedly had little interest in his writings as personal property and even less interest in posterity.

How inconsistent is the picture of the “much offended” Shakespeare we glimpsed above with what we gather about Shakespeare at other moments of his artistic career? Robert Greene’s attack on Shakespeare in *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit* is well known: having given some advice to three of his fellow playwrights (probably Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Nashe, and George Peele), he goes on to warn them against an

upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and beeing an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey.⁴

It is possible, of course, to dismiss Greene’s attack as symptomatic of his jealousy and therefore hopelessly biased. It would admittedly be foolish to argue that Greene is an altogether fair and disinterested commentator. Nevertheless, the passage may be of greater interest for what it tells us about the object of the attack than about the attacker. As early as 1592, Shakespeare had done enough to awaken a rival playwright’s jealousy. He was well advanced in the first tetralogy, the most ambitious project the

² See Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life*, rev. edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 271. For a facsimile edition of the 1612 *Passionate Pilgrim* with an excellent introduction, see *The Passionate Pilgrim*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (New York and London: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1940).

³ Sidney Lee, *A Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1898), 279.

⁴ I quote from D. Allen Carroll’s edition, *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit, Bought with a Million of Repentance (1592)*, *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies*, 114 (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1994), lines 939–43.

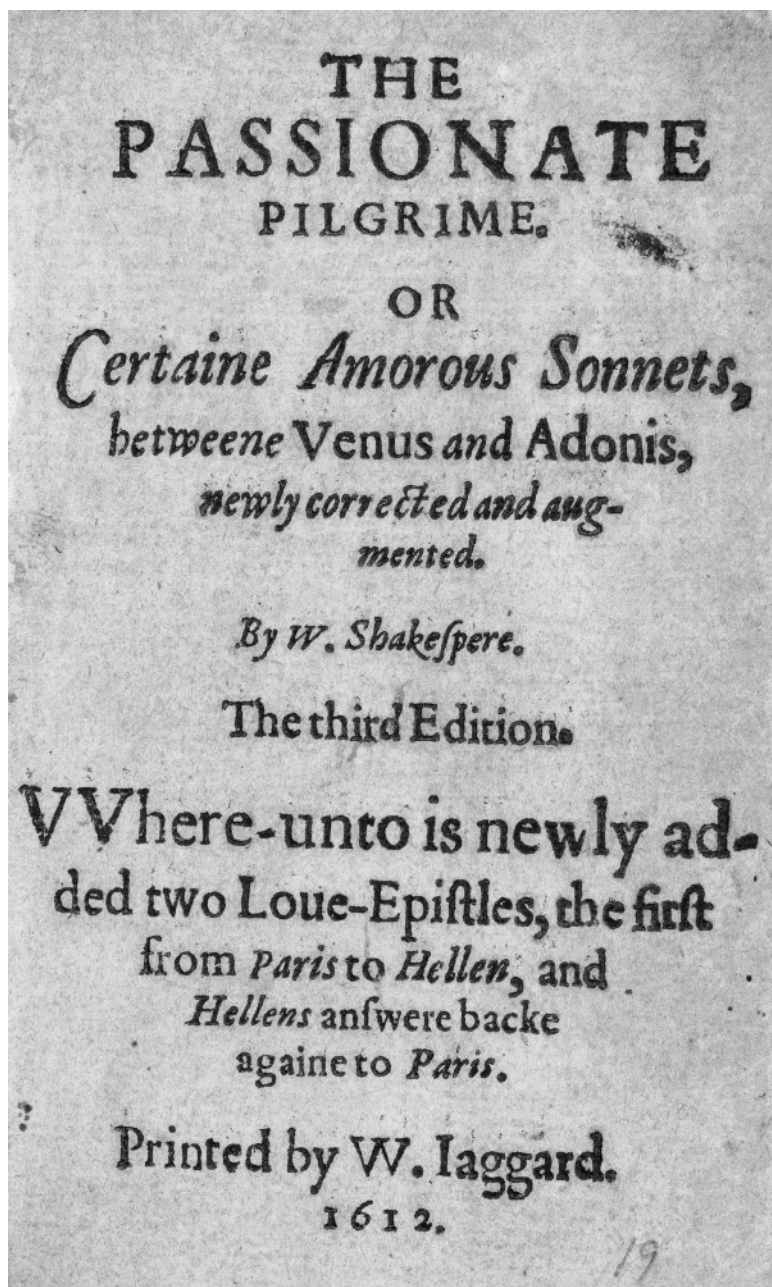


Figure 1. Title page of the third octavo edition of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, 1612 (STC 22343), attributed to Shakespeare.

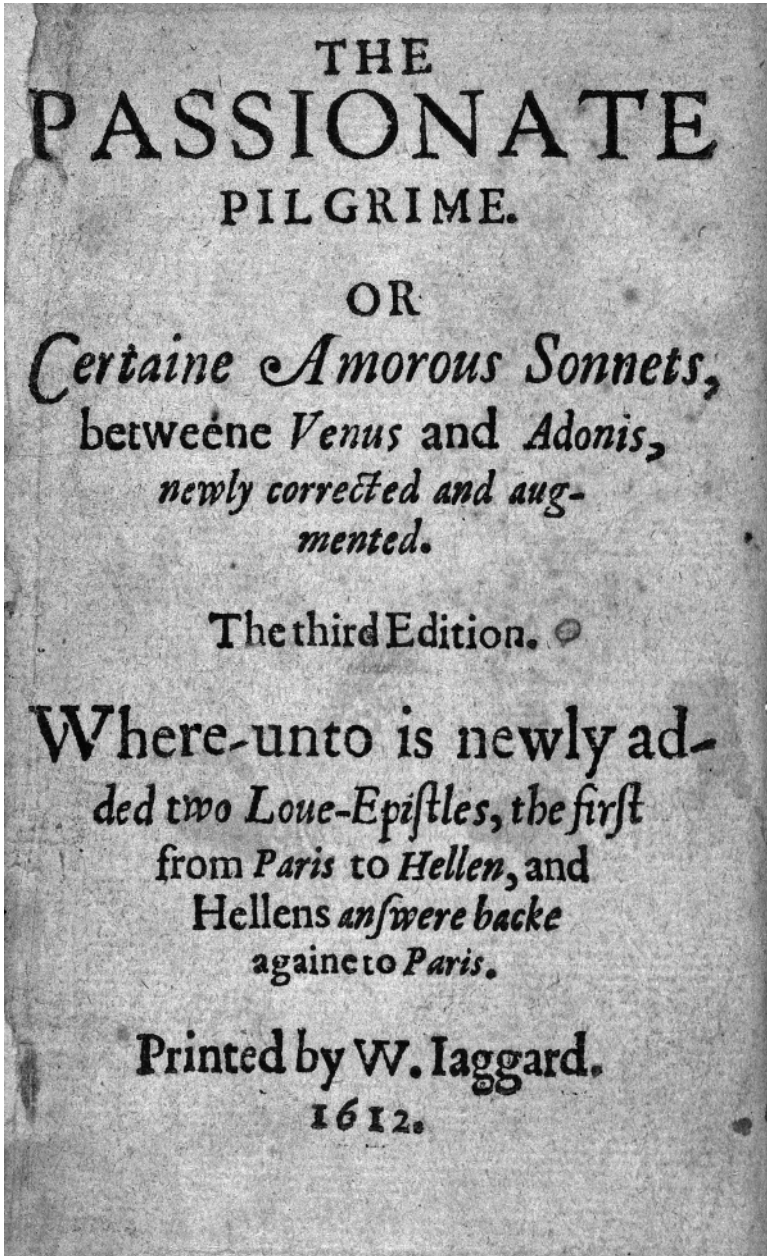


Figure 2. Cancel title page of the third octavo edition of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, 1612 (STC 22343), with no authorship attribution.

professional stage had yet seen, which was to find its completion soon after with *Richard III*.⁵ Significantly, attributing to Shakespeare a “*Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*,” Greene not only accuses Shakespeare of duplicity but simultaneously alludes to a line in 3 *Henry VI*, probably the most recent product of Shakespeare’s ambitious project. Marlowe had written a two-part play and so, it seems, had Thomas Kyd.⁶ A mere player (as opposed to Greene and other university-trained gentlemen), not yet thirty years of age and still relatively new among London’s playwrights, Shakespeare was not content to follow their precedent but seems to have been eager to outdo them. Shakespeare, Greene has it, “is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey.” There is no way of knowing how justified Greene’s punning allusion to Shakespeare’s alleged conceitedness was, but what we know about Shakespeare’s dramatic writings at the time does suggest a fair amount of artistic ambition and self-consciousness.

Some time between Greene’s attack in 1592 and Heywood’s letter in 1612, Shakespeare must have written his sonnets. No reader can ignore how prominently the theme of poetry as immortalization figures in them. In fact, no fewer than twenty-eight sonnets deal with this topic.⁷ Sonnet 74 will serve as an example:

But be contented when that fell arrest
Without all bail shall carry me away.
My life hath in this line some interest,
Which for memorial still with thee shall stay.
When thou reviewest this, thou dost review
The very part was consecrate to thee.
The earth can have but earth, which is his due;
My spirit is thine, the better part of me.
So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,
The prey of worms, my body being dead,
The coward conquest of a wretch’s knife,
Too base of thee to be rememberèd.
The worth of that is that which it contains,
And that is this, and this with thee remains.

⁵ Note, however, that not all scholars agree today that the three parts of *Henry VI* were written by Shakespeare alone. See below, page 217.

⁶ See Lukas Erne, “Enter the Ghost of Andrea’: Recovering Thomas Kyd’s Two-Part Play,” *English Literary Renaissance*, 30 (2000), 339–72, rpt. and rev. in *Beyond “The Spanish Tragedy”: A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd*, Revels Plays Companion Library (Manchester University Press, 2001), 14–46.

⁷ J. B. Leishman, *Themes and Variations in Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (London: Hutchinson, 1961), 21–22. Sonnet 74 and, unless stated otherwise, all following quotations are from Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, gen. eds., *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

The poem sharply distinguishes between “that” (the perishable body) and “this” (the poetry we are reading), poetry being “the better part of me” which survives after death. J. B. Leishman rightly pointed out that Shakespeare’s repeated insistence on his writings as that which will transcend his mortal existence (“My life hath in this line some interest”) is not easily squared with his alleged indifference to the afterlife of his writings: “so far as I am aware, no writer on the Sonnets has remarked upon the fact that [Shakespeare], who is commonly supposed to have been indifferent to literary fame and perhaps only dimly aware of the magnitude of his own poetic genius, has written both more copiously and more memorably on this topic [i.e. poetry as immortalization] than any other sonneteer.”⁸ It is true, of course, that others had voiced similar ideas before Shakespeare. In Sonnet 69 of his *Amoretti*, Edmund Spenser writes that “this verse vowd to eternity” is an “immortall monument.”⁹ Elsewhere, Michael Drayton speaks of “my World-out-wearing Rimes.”¹⁰ More examples could be given, going all the way back to Ovid.¹¹ Yet Leishman counters the objection that Shakespeare was simply drawing upon a well-known *topos*: “It seems to be generally assumed, in a vague sort of way, that most, perhaps all, sonneteers, English, French and Italian, perhaps even from Petrarch onwards, had written a great deal about their own poetry, and that Shakespeare was merely saying the sort of things they had said, but saying them better: this . . . is far from the truth.”¹² Leishman suggests that, in his sonnets, Shakespeare, more than any of his predecessors or contemporaries, seems to have been obsessed with the transcendence of his own poetry.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, an English poet’s hopes that his verse would live on after his death were probably more likely to come true than ever before. More than a century after William Caxton had established the first printing press in England, print had become widespread. Elizabethan England was in many ways “a printing age” in which “reading was no longer the prerogative of a few.”¹³ In the last two decades of

⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹ Lines 9–10. I quote from *Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti and Epithalamion: A Critical Edition*, ed. Kenneth J. Larsen (Tempe, Ariz: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997), 96.

¹⁰ Line 7, Sonnet 44 (in the final order first printed 1599) in *Idea’s Mirror*. I quote from *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J. William Hebel, corr. edn, 5 vols. (Oxford: Shakespeare Head Press, 1961), II.332.

¹¹ See, for instance, Laurie E. Maguire, “Composition/Decomposition: Singular Shakespeare and the Death of the Author,” in *The Renaissance Text: Theory, Editing, Textuality*, ed. Andrew Murphy (Manchester University Press, 2000), 135–53, and Leishman’s study.

¹² Leishman, *Themes and Variations*, 22.

¹³ H. S. Bennett, *English Books & Readers, 1558 to 1603* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1965), 2, 4. For the impact of print on early modern culture, see Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*, 2 vols.

the sixteenth century, an average of about 280 titles per year were published in England.¹⁴ While the output of what we now call “literature” remained below that of religious texts throughout the sixteenth century, the number of literary titles was increasing and reached more than a quarter of the total output by the end of the century. The years 1500 and 1550 saw the publication of fourteen and twenty-one “literary” titles respectively, but no fewer than eighty-four of them were published in the year 1600.¹⁵ By the time Shakespeare started writing poetry and plays, the printing press had made the creation and perpetuation of literary fame a distinct possibility.

It is one of the great paradoxes of English literary history that even though print had become an agent of greatest importance in the construction of literary reputation by the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, scholarship has long taught us that Shakespeare and many of his contemporary dramatists remained largely unaffected by these developments. Writing about Shakespeare and his contemporaries in the theatrical world, Andrew Gurr only perpetuates what others said before him when holding that “Except for a few poets, nobody gave a thought to posterity.”¹⁶ Julie Stone Peters has pertinently identified this widespread belief as “One of those lies so convenient to the history of progress: that Renaissance dramatists were unconcerned with the circulation of their work on the page; that the press kept aloof from the stage and the early stage kept aloof from the press.” Her impressive study shows that, on the contrary, in England as well as in the rest of Western Europe, the institutions of the printing press and the modern theater “grew up together.” Whereas a performance critic like William Worthen believes that “Shakespeare’s works were perhaps not viewed as textual in his era,”¹⁷ Peters amply demonstrates that, by the end of the sixteenth century,

(Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450–1800*, trans. David Gerard, eds. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and David Wootton (London: NLB, 1976); Roger Chartier, *Cultural Uses of Print*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton University Press, 1987) and “Texts, Printing, Reading,” in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 154–75; and Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹⁴ I owe this figure to the website at <http://cbsr26.ucr.edu/ESTCStatistics.html>, which presents “Some Statistics on the Number of Surviving Printed Titles for Great Britain and Dependencies from the Beginnings of Print in England to the year 1800,” by Alain Veylit.

¹⁵ Edith L. Klotz, “A Subject Analysis of English Imprints for Every Tenth Year from 1480 to 1640,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 1 (1937–38), 417–19, 418.

¹⁶ Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642*, 3rd edn (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 46.

¹⁷ William B. Worthen, “Drama, Performativity, and Performance,” *PMLA*, 113 (1998), 1093–107, 1099.

“Drama was understood to play itself out in two arenas – on the stage and on the page.”¹⁸

One way to perpetuate the belief in Shakespeare’s indifference to the publication and afterlife of his playbooks is to argue that, while the influence of the printing press had spread by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, modern notions of individuality, authorship, and copyright had not. It is true that a copyright law in the modern sense did not exist before the eighteenth century. Copyright in Shakespeare’s time, Lyman Ray Patterson rightly points out,

was a private affair of the company. The common-law courts had no part in its development, for it was strictly regulated by company ordinances. The Stationers’ company granted the copyright, and since it was developed by and limited to company members, it functioned in accordance with their self-interest . . . Authors, not being members of the company, were not eligible to hold copyright, so that the monopoly of the stationers meant that their copyright was, in practice and in theory, a right of the publisher only. Not until after the Statute of Anne [of 1709] did the modern idea of copyright as a right of the author develop.¹⁹

In so far as the legal aspect of copyright is concerned, this is an excellent summary upon which I cannot hope to improve. The argument that “the modern idea of copyright as a right of the author” did not develop until the eighteenth century is problematic, however. It fosters precisely the impression of the Renaissance writer who has no sense of having any moral rights to his works. In fact, the *idea* of copyright as the right of the author was very much present in Shakespeare’s time, though it was not anchored in the law until the eighteenth century.²⁰

In the early seventeenth century, several writers show keen awareness of what they perceived as the stationers’ usurpation of their rights. In his petition for a patent for his *Paraphrase upon the Psalmes*, George Sandys wrote that, “whereas the Company of Stationers have an order, that no Printer shall print any booke but for one of their own Societie, thereby to ingrosse to themselves the whole profit of other mens Labours; He humbly

¹⁸ Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480–1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1, 4–5, 8.

¹⁹ Lyman Ray Patterson, *Copyright in Historical Perspective* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), 5. On the subject of copyright, see also chapter 5 of Marjorie Plant, *The English Book Trade: An Economic History of the Making and Sale of Books* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1939), 98–121; Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Joseph Loewenstein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²⁰ This point has recently been well made by Brian Vickers (*English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Vickers (Oxford University Press, 1999), 29).

desireth, that your Majestie wilbe pleased to grant him a Patent of Priviledge for these his Paraphrases.”²¹ When George Wither was involved in a dispute with the Stationers’ Company over a patent for his *Hymns and Songs of the Church* in the 1620s, he tells us that he “humbly petitioned the Kings most excellent Maiestie” so that “according to the lawes of nature, I might enioy the benefit of some part of myne owne labours.” Authorial copyright is here not a modern notion that is anachronistically imposed upon a time and a society in which it did not yet apply, but one which, as Wither tells us, should always apply “according to the lawes of nature.” Wither explains that “by an vniust custome . . . the Stationers haue so vsurped vpon the labours of all writers, that when they [the writers] haue consumed their youth and fortunes in perfiting some laborious worke, those cruell Bee-masters burne the poore Athenian bees for their hony, or else driue them from the best part thereof.”²² Like others before and after him (including Heminge and Condell in the prefatory material to Shakespeare’s First Folio), Wither is scandalized by the interference of stationers who “take vppon them to publish bookes contriued, altered, and mangled at their owne pleasurs, without consent of the writers: nay and to change the name sometymys, both of booke and Author (after they haue been ymprinted).”²³ He concludes that “it is high tyme to seeke a remedie, and a remedy (I hope) wil shortly be provided in due place.”²⁴ A copyright that protected stationers but not authors seems to have been thought of by many writers as a historically contingent “vniust custome” that was defying “the lawes of nature.”

Nor did the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century practice of protecting stationers but not authors apply to all books. King James and his successor granted a series of patents to authors who were thereby allowed to derive a profit from the sale of their books. Samuel Daniel was granted a patent for his *History of England*, Fynes Moryson for his *Itinerary*, Caleb Morley for “a book invented by him for the helpe of memory and grounding of Schollars

²¹ Bodleian MS Banks 11/62, dated 1635, printed in W.W. Greg, *Companion to Arber* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 321.

²² George Wither, *The Schollers Purgatory* (London, 1624), A3^r. A facsimile edition is available in “The English Experience” series (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1977). For the original text of the royal “privilege” and for some of the other surviving legal documents, see Greg, *Companion to Arber*, 212–18. On Wither’s dispute with the Stationers’ Company, see Norman E. Carlson, “Wither and the Stationers,” *Studies in Bibliography*, 19 (1966), 210–15; Jocelyn C. Creigh, “George Wither and the Stationers: Facts and Fiction,” *Publications of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 74 (1980), 49–57; and James Doelman, “George Wither, the Stationers’ Company and the English Psalter,” *Studies in Philology*, 90 (1993), 74–82. For a previously unknown reply to Wither that presents the stationers’ point of view, see Allan Pritchard, “George Wither’s Quarrel with the Stationers: An Anonymous Reply to *The Schollers Purgatory*,” *Studies in Bibliography*, 16 (1963), 27–42.

²³ Wither, *Schollers Purgatory*, A5^v–A6^r. ²⁴ *Ibid.*, A6^r.

in severall languages,” Joseph Webb “for the teaching the languages after a newe sorte by him devised, and alsoe the printing of the bookes and selling them.” Many more could be added.²⁵ The growing number of patents that allowed authors to reap the benefits of their inventions testifies to the fact that the *idea* of copyright as the right of the author was not absent from Renaissance England.

Unlike many poets of his own time, however, Shakespeare was first and foremost a playwright. Providing the company in which he was also an actor and shareholder with scripts, Shakespeare was a participant in an entertainment industry that needed plays to make money. As in today’s movie industry, novelty was often the key to commercial success. While poets may well have hoped to create an “immortall moniment,” many playwrights knew they were producing little more than theatrical fast food. Yet, to understand the Elizabethan and Jacobean plays that have come down to us as mere products and unlikely survivors of an entertainment industry that only produced to the moment does less than full justice to the status these plays had. For their very existence bears witness to the fact that, during Shakespeare’s time, many plays started having more than one kind of public existence: on stage *and* on the page; at the Globe, the Rose, or the Fortune *and* in St. Paul’s Churchyard; produced by players *and* by printers. During Shakespeare’s lifetime, *The First Part of Henry IV* would not only have been watched by a great number of spectators, but also read by all those who bought the printed playbooks that appeared in no fewer than six editions. Shakespeare’s attitude toward the emergent printed drama, the place his plays occupy within it, and the way in which it may have affected the composition of his plays are at the center of this book.

Before introducing the nine chapters in which I propose to develop these issues, it is necessary to deal with the broader question of the status of printed playbooks in Renaissance England. Today, Elizabethan and

²⁵ I quote from the list of “Printing Patents Granted by James the First and His Successor,” in Edward Arber, ed., *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554–1640*, 5 vols. (London: Privately Printed, 1875–94), 5.lvii–lviii. The fullest treatment this topic has received is Arnold Hunt’s “Book Trade Patents, 1603–1640,” in *The Book Trade and Its Customers: Historical Essays for Robin Myers*, eds. Arnold Hunt, Giles Mandelbrote, and Alison Shell (Winchester, Hampshire: St. Paul’s Bibliographies, 1997), 27–54. Hunt shows that James and his son granted more than seventy patents, more than half of which did not go to members of the Stationers’ Register (27–28). Hunt presents convincing evidence that suggests that the increase of the number of patents to authors in the early seventeenth century was due to “authorial dissatisfaction with the restrictions imposed by the system of publisher’s copyright” (31). See also Phoebe Sheavyn, *The Literary Profession in the Elizabethan Age*, 2nd edn, rev. by J. W. Saunders (Manchester University Press, 1967), 76–77.

Jacobean drama occupies a central position in the English literary canon. The drama of Shakespeare, in particular, has been turned into a literary and cultural monument that has little to do with the prestige it enjoyed in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. It is important to recognize that, to a large extent, the cultural capital that Shakespeare, Jonson, Marlowe, and their contemporary dramatists possess today is a product of later times. “Shakespeare,” as Michael Dobson and Margreta de Grazia have shown, is in many ways a product of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.²⁶ Scholarship has thus rightly insisted on how later ages turned the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries into literary and cultural entities that are substantially different from what they were in their own time. What this insistence may have led to, however, is a scholarly climate that underestimates the legitimacy printed playbooks were starting to acquire in Renaissance England.

Students of Elizabethan drama have often been told that early quarto playbooks represented mere ephemera, to be read and discarded. Fredson Bowers is among those who have argued that “plays were not regarded as ‘literature’ but as relatively ephemeral entertainment reading on no higher plane than, say, a novel made from the script of a popular moving picture.”²⁷ In order to support the claim that printed plays were not considered literature in Shakespeare’s lifetime, critics usually refer to Sir Thomas Bodley’s injunction not to include any such “riff raff Books” in the great library which he began gathering in 1598: “I can see no good Reason, to alter my Opinion, for excluding such Books, as Almanacks, Plays, and an infinite Number, that are daily Printed, of very unworthy matters.”²⁸ It is necessary to raise the question, however, of just how representative Bodley is.

The composition of libraries in Shakespeare’s time was in a state of flux. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, most libraries were attached to ecclesiastical institutions, and their collections had generally confined themselves to the four principal fields of medieval learning: theology, law, medicine, and philosophy. The dissolution of the monasteries led to the rise of private and university libraries in the course of the sixteenth century, and the early seventeenth century saw the advent of new institutional libraries such as the Bodleian library – which opened in 1602 – and the

²⁶ See Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660–1769* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), and Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

²⁷ Fredson Bowers, “The Publication of English Renaissance Plays,” in *Elizabethan Dramatists*, ed. Fredson Bowers, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 62 (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1987), 414.

²⁸ *Reliquiae Bodleianae; Or Some Genuine Remains of Sir Thomas Bodley* (London, 1703), 82, 278.

first independent town library, founded in Norwich in 1608. One of the results of this development was that the collections generally became much more varied and open to previously unacceptable printed matter, including playbooks.²⁹ As has been shown, the acquisition of printed plays seemed worthwhile “perhaps not to Bodley but certainly to many early modern men and women.”³⁰ Bodley’s exclusion of playbooks is, in fact, exceptional rather than the norm.

The library of Sir John Harington (1561–1612), godson of Queen Elizabeth and translator of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, presents a very different picture from that suggested by Bodley. Harington purchased, bound and catalogued the great majority of all the playbooks published in the first decade of the seventeenth century, including no fewer than eighteen copies of Shakespeare’s plays.³¹ His extant writings suggest that he not only purchased, but was intimately acquainted with, the playbooks he owned. For instance, in his Rabelaisian *Metamorphosis of Ajax*, which, along with other satires, led to his banishment from court, he writes: “For the shrewd wife, reade the booke of taming a shrew, which hath made a number of us so perfect, that now every one can rule a shrew in our countrey, save he that hath her.”³² Harington’s ironic promise of a fictional lesson that seemingly instructs only to prove useless in actual life highlights and intelligently reenacts the final twist of the dramatic Sly-frame present in *A Shrew* (published in 1594) but absent from *The Shrew* (not published until 1623):

TAPSTER. Ay marry, but you had best get you home,
For your wife will course you for dreaming here tonight.
SLY. Will she? I know now how to tame a shrew.
I dreamt upon it all this night till now³³

Harington does not seem to have considered it below himself to read widely and carefully among the printed playbooks of his time.

²⁹ Heidi Brayman Hackel, “‘Rowme’ of Its Own: Printed Drama in Early Libraries,” in *A New History of Early English Drama*, eds. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 113–30, 114. Hackel’s essay provides an excellent survey, demonstrating that “vernacular drama – if not yet granted the security it has found at the Folger Shakespeare Library – was beginning to find ‘rowme’ in private libraries” (127).

³⁰ See Hackel, “‘Rowme’ of Its Own,” 127.

³¹ See F. J. Furnivall, “Sir John Harington’s Shakespeare Quartos,” *Notes and Queries*, 7th series, 9 (1890), 382–83.

³² John Harington, *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*, ed. Elizabeth Donno (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 153–54.

³³ Scene 15, lines 14–17. I quote from *The Taming of a Shrew*, ed. Stephen Roy Miller, *The New Cambridge Shakespeare: The Early Quartos* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Nor was Harington an exception. A book-list of *c.* 1625 shows that Sir Roger Townshend, Bacon's grandson, was in possession of several play-books, including Jonson's *Volpone* and Chapman's *All Fools*.³⁴ A list of books in the possession of Frances Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater (dated 1633) included Jonson's *The New Inn*, a volume of "Diverse plays by Shakespeare" and several others volumes of "diverse plays,"³⁵ while another list of books owned by Scipio le Squyer (1579–1659), Deputy Chamberlain of the Exchequer (1620–59), includes Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, Middleton's *A Game at Chess*, Jonson's *Volpone*, and Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*.³⁶ Sir Edward Dering, first baronet, of Surrenden in Kent (1598–1644) recorded the purchase of no fewer than 225 play-books in the years 1619 to 1624.³⁷ A list of books purchased by Sir Thomas Barrington, baronet, from 1635 to 1639 includes many works of theology and philosophy, but also a copy each of the two parts of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*.³⁸ In the 1660s, Henry Oxinden (1608–70) inherited a collection that had been formed decades earlier which included some seventy playbooks printed between 1590 and 1616.³⁹ Humphrey Dyson (d. 1633), son-in-law of Thomas Speght who edited the 1598 Chaucer *Works*, drew up a "Catalogue of all such Bookes touching aswell the State Ecclesiastical as Temporall of the Realme of England w[hi]ch were published vpon seuerall occasions." He found nothing inappropriate about including six play quartos published between 1591 and 1613, among them Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (1609).⁴⁰ The library of Robert Burton contained a great many "comedies, tragedies, poetry, and comic works," and marginal comments in books in his library suggest his familiarity with

³⁴ See R. J. Fehrenbach, gen. ed., *Private Libraries in Renaissance England: A Collection and Catalogue of Tudor and Early Stuart Book-Lists* (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), 81–82, 85, 134.

³⁵ See Hackel, "'Rowme' of Its Own," 125.

³⁶ F. Taylor, "The Books and Manuscripts of Scipio le Squyer, Deputy Chamberlain of the Exchequer (1620–59)," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 25 (1941), 137–64, esp. 157–58.

³⁷ See Fehrenbach, gen. ed., *Private Libraries*, 141. Dering also staged private theatricals, including 1 and 2 *Henry IV* of which a manuscript version of 1623 that cuts down the two parts to one play survives in the Folger Shakespeare Library (v.b.34). See Laetitia Yaendle, "The Dating of Sir Edward Dering's Copy of 'The History of King Henry the Fourth,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37 (1986), 224–26, and T. N. S. Lennam, "Sir Edward Dering's Collection of Playbooks, 1619–1624," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 16 (1965), 145–53.

³⁸ Mary Elizabeth Bohannon, "A London Bookseller's Bill: 1635–1639," *The Library*, 18, 4th series (1938), 417–46.

³⁹ W. W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, 4 vols. (London: Bibliographical Society, 1939–59), III.1314.

⁴⁰ See Alan Nelson's home page at <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson/winess.html>. Dyson's "Catalogue" is preserved in the Codrington Library of All Souls' College, Oxford (MS 117).

Hamlet and *Henry IV*.⁴¹ One of the largest seventeenth-century family collections, the Bridgewater House library included plays by Shakespeare, Marlowe, and many of their contemporaries.⁴² Edward 2nd Viscount Conway (1594–1665) owned an astounding 350 English playbooks.⁴³ William Drummond of Hawthornden drew up lists of “Bookes red be me” for the years 1606 to 1614. The list for 1606 contains forty-two titles of which eight are plays: “Orlando Furioso, comedie,” “Romeo and Julieta, tragedie,” “Loues Labors Lost, comedie,” “The Malcontent, comedie,” “A Midsommers Nights Dreame, comedie,” “Doctor Dodipol, comedie,” “Alphonsus historie, comed.,” and “The Tragedie of Locrine.”⁴⁴ Extant books that had been in Drummond’s possession – like his copies of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, now in the library of the University of Edinburgh – show Drummond’s careful overlinings of witty and poetic passages.⁴⁵ In Drummond’s lists, plays appear alongside “Knox, Chronicles,” “The Holie Loue of Heuinlie Wisdome,” and Sir Thomas Hoby’s translation of Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*, which indicates that he found nothing inappropriate about juxtaposing playbooks with “serious” books. Far from indicating that playbooks were read and discarded like modern newspapers or other ephemera, the extant evidence suggests that playbooks started being read, collected, bound, and catalogued from the beginning of the seventeenth century.

For many adherents to the now omnipresent performance criticism, the basic premise underlying their approach to Shakespeare is the claim that his plays were written in order to be performed.⁴⁶ I will argue that this view needs to be reconsidered. In a sense, what is particular about the time of

⁴¹ Nicolas K. Kiessling, *The Library of Robert Burton* (Oxford: Bibliographical Society, 1988), 43, 87, and Hackel, “‘Rowme’ of Its Own,” 120.

⁴² Hackel, “‘Rowme’ of Its Own,” 122.

⁴³ T. A. Birrell, “Reading as Pastime: The Place of Light Literature in some Gentlemen’s Libraries of the 17th Century,” in Robin Myers and Michael Harris, eds., *Property of a Gentleman: The Formation, Organisation and Dispersal of the Private Library 1620–1920* (Winchester: St. Paul’s Bibliographies, 1991), 113–31, 124. See also Arthur Freeman and Paul Grinke, “Four New Shakespeare Quartos?,” *The Times Literary Supplement*, 5 April 2002, 17–18.

⁴⁴ I quote from David Laing, ed., *Extracts from the Hawthornden Manuscripts* (Edinburgh, 1831–32), 17–18. Seven of the thirty-one plays listed under “Bookes red anno 1609” are also plays: “No Body, comedy,” “Sir Gyles Gooscape, comedie,” “A Mad World, comedie,” “The Ile of Fooles, comedie,” “Liberalitie and Progidalitie, comedie,” “Parasitaster, by Marston.” For the mistaken assumption (perpetuated by Greg, Chambers, and Prouty and still in evidence in the latest edition of Harbage’s *Annals*) that Peele’s lost “Hunting of Cupid,” which Drummond also read in 1609, is a play, see John P. Cutts, “Peele’s *Hunting of Cupid*,” *Studies in the Renaissance*, 5 (1958), 121–32.

⁴⁵ See R. H. MacDonald, *The Library of Drummond of Hawthornden* (Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 140.

⁴⁶ See, for instance, Herbert R. Coursen, *Shakespearean Performance as Interpretation* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1992), 15.

Shakespeare's active involvement with the theater in London is that plays stopped having a public existence that was confined to the stage. The previous age, the first generation, as it were, of the London commercial stage between, say, the opening of the Red Lion in 1567 and the end of the 1580s, has left isolated traces of plays of which we might rightly say that they only had a public life on stage: "Lady Barbara, Clorido and Radiamanta, Predor and Lucia, Panecia, Perseus and Andromeda, Phedrastus, Timoclea at the Siege of Thebes, King Xerxes, The Painter's Daughter, The Red Knight, The History of Error, The Cruelty of a Stepmother, The Three Sisters of Mantua, Murderous Michael, and Felix and Philomena."⁴⁷ Dozens more could be added. These plays were clearly popular and deemed worthy to be performed at court in the 1570s and 1580s. Yet nothing is known about them except their titles, suggesting that with a very few exceptions even the best plays of the time had an existence on stage but not yet on the printed page.

Things radically changed in the early 1590s, in the very years in which Shakespeare was making himself a name as an "upstart Crow" among London's playwrights. Social historians have described this period as one in which literacy was higher than ever before, a factor that may have contributed to the emergence of printed drama on an unprecedented scale.⁴⁸ It is true that, according to Peter Blayney, printed playbooks did not account for a "significant fraction of the trade in English books."⁴⁹ Yet, if we concentrate on the twenty years from 1594 to 1613, the years most relevant for Shakespeare as they coincide with his years with the Lord Chamberlain's and King's Men, a slightly different picture presents itself. For, as a detailed analysis of the available data makes clear, it is during these years that the publication of playbooks was at its peak, with more than double the number of titles appearing in the twenty years between 1594 and 1613 than in the same number of years from 1584 to 1593 and from 1614 to 1623 (see Appendix A). During the twenty years of Shakespeare's active

⁴⁷ The titles of these plays are quoted from Alfred Harbage's *Annals of English Drama, 975–1700*, rev. by Samuel Schoenbaum (London: Methuen, 1964), 42–48.

⁴⁸ Arguing that "The reign of Elizabeth saw a solid improvement in literacy among tradesmen and craftsmen in all parts of England," David Cressy has tried to measure and describe in considerable detail the "surge toward literacy" in that period (*Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 153). Predictably, illiteracy in London was scarcer than elsewhere. For instance, Cressy shows that illiteracy of tradesmen and craftsmen in the diocese of London from the 1590s to the 1630s dropped to approximately 30 percent, considerably less than in other parts of the country (146).

⁴⁹ Peter Blayney, "The Publication of Playbooks," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, eds. Cox and Kastan, 385.

involvement with the company in which he was player, playwright, and shareholder, a total of 246 playbook titles was published, more than twelve per year. The total number of titles published in London in these years being close to 375 per year, playbooks account for approximately 3.3 percent, or one title in thirty. This may not sound like much, but we need to remember that the other twenty-nine titles comprise genres as varied as history, law, politics, science, education, and religious controversy; plague bills and other official documents; tales of travel and adventure; bibles, psalms, and sermons; and ballads and other ephemera. Since “literature,” as pointed out above, constituted only about a quarter of the total number of titles, printed playbooks accounted for approximately one-seventh of all literary titles, including translations from the classics, books of verse, countless tales of chivalry and romance, miscellanies and anthologies, academic and closet drama, euphuistic and other prose works, besides many ballads. Whether this is a “significant” fraction or not may depend on one’s point of view, but it seems fair to say that the fraction was much larger then than it is today. To look at it from a different angle, for a stationer who invested considerably more time and money into one Latin law book in folio than into a dozen playbooks in quarto, printed plays must have remained of little significance.⁵⁰ Yet, for potential customers with an interest in literature and for aspiring poets and dramatists such as Shakespeare, printed playbooks became a conspicuous presence in St. Paul’s Churchyard.

In the early 1630s, William Prynne, author of the bulky anti-theatrical *Histrion-mastix*, complains that more than 40,000 playbooks have been printed and sold in the last two years, a figure which conforms well with what we can gather from Greg’s *Bibliography of Early Printed Drama* about play publications during the years in question.⁵¹ If we apply the same arithmetic to the time of Shakespeare’s active presence in London, similar figures present themselves: in the year 1594 alone – the year in which Shakespeare joined the Lord Chamberlain’s Men and first attained a position of professional stability – some 20,000 copies of playtexts written for the commercial stage were printed, more than in the 1570s and the 1580s

⁵⁰ Even this statement may deserve some qualification. The stationer Thomas Creede was commercially involved in the making of no fewer than thirty-five playbook editions from 1594 to 1616, Edward Allde in thirty-six from 1584 and 1624, and Valentine Simmes in twenty-five from 1597 to 1611. It seems reasonable to assume that “publishing plays would not usually have been seen as a shortcut to wealth” (Blayney, “Publication of Playbooks,” 389), but the careers of the above stationers do not suggest that they considered playbooks as commercially insignificant.

⁵¹ See Hackel, “‘Rowme’ of Its Own,” 116.

altogether. In addition, in the three years 1598, 1599, and 1600 a total of about 50,000 copies of playbooks must have been printed.⁵² Moreover, playbooks adopted roman typography earlier than most other literary genres, suggesting that the market for printed plays was catering to an educated and progressive readership.⁵³ During the 1590s, stage plays began to enjoy a second existence of a kind and scope which we would be unwise to ignore.

The claim that Shakespeare's quarto playbooks would have been considered sub-literary material also deserves to be reconsidered on other accounts. In an anthology that gathers excerpts from a number of English poets, we read:

Rude was his garment, and to rags all rent,
 No better had he, ne for better carde:
 With blistered hands among the cynders brent,
 And fingers filthy, with long nayles vnpared,
 Right for to rend the food on which he fared.
 His name was Care; a black Smyth by his trade:
 That neither day nor night from working spared.
 But to small purpose yron wedges made,
 Those be vnquiet thoughts, that woful minds inuade.

Ed. Spencer. [sic]

Care keepes his watch in euery olde mans eye,
 And where Care lodges, sleepe will neuer lie:
 But where vnbrui'd youth with vnstufte braine
 Doth couch his limbs, there golden sleepe doth raine.

W. Shakespeare.

At first, there seems nothing extraordinary about this juxtaposition. Here we have two thematically related passages, correctly attributed to two of England's greatest poets. Both excerpts will be recognized quite easily by those well versed in English literature. The first is a stanza taken from *The Faerie Queene* (4.5.35) which describes the blacksmith Care, forger of "vnquiet thoughts" which invade the mind of Scudamor after Ate makes him suspect the loyalty of Britomart and Amoret. The second is part of the Friar's moralizing admonitions to the male protagonist in *Romeo and Juliet*

⁵² For the number of editions upon which I base my count, see Appendix A. For edition sizes, see Blayney, "Publication of Playbooks," 412–13.

⁵³ See Mark Bland, "The Appearance of the Text in Early Modern England," *TEXT: An Interdisciplinary Annual of Textual Studies*, 11 (1998), 106; and Heidi Brayman Hackel, "The 'Great Variety' of Readers and Early Modern Reading Practices," in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 145.

(2.2.35–38). What is noteworthy about these passages is when the anthology containing them was published. The copy in the Folger Shakespeare Library bears the (probably genuine) manuscript signature “W^m Wordsworth” on the title page, and we would perhaps not be greatly surprised if the anthology were more or less contemporary with Lamb’s *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*. Called *England’s Parnassus, or, The choicest flowers of our moderne poets*, the anthology was printed as early as 1600, however, less than halfway through Shakespeare’s dramatic career.

The juxtaposition of passages from Shakespeare plays and recognized literary masterpieces such as Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* in an anthology of 1600 calls into question the view promoted by Bowers and others about the (lack of) prestige of plays in Shakespeare’s time: “the key to understanding their original status is the recognition that in their own day they were not highly regarded except as entertainment, without literary value.”⁵⁴ It seems on the contrary, as Barbara Mowat has suggested, that “the printing and selling of plays for readers made the boundary between theater and literary culture increasingly porous.”⁵⁵ It is true that Shakespeare’s plays were consumed as part of an entertainment industry in which many writers had no literary pretensions. Yet excerpts from the same plays were also consumed as poetry amid the “choyest Flowers” of contemporary writers.

Anyone who is aware of T. W. Baldwin’s *Smalle Latine and Lesse Greeke* and Geoffrey Bullough’s *Narrative and Dramatic Sources* knows that Shakespeare must have been an avid reader of books.⁵⁶ So is it plausible to assume that Shakespeare remained unaware of an anthology such as *England’s Parnassus*? And, if not, can we expect that the writer who expressed the hope that poetry would outlive “the guilded monument” with greater insistence than anyone else remained unaffected by the fact that passages from his own dramatic writings started appearing in anthologies along with the recognized literary masterpieces of Spenser and Sidney? The recent recognition that Shakespeare may have revised several of his plays clearly does nothing to discourage a view of Shakespeare as a self-conscious artist.

Yet how could Shakespeare – as a participant in an entertainment industry in which competition was fierce – have afforded to be mindful of more than the immediate needs of the business in which he was a player? In

⁵⁴ Bowers, “Publication,” 415.

⁵⁵ Barbara Mowat, “The Theater and Literary Culture,” in *A New History of Early English Drama*, eds. Cox and Kastan, 217.

⁵⁶ See T. W. Baldwin, *Smalle Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944) and Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (London: Routledge, 1957–75).

a reaction to earlier views of Shakespeare that removed him from the material pressures of the stage business in which he was involved, scholars habitually portray him as one among many playwrights writing for the public stage under similar circumstances. What may be disregarded from such a perspective is the extent to which Shakespeare, as a shareholder in his company, was what Susan Cerasano has called a “privileged playwright.”⁵⁷ While we do not know how much Shakespeare was paid for the plays he furnished his company, it is clear that the greatest part of the handsome fortune Shakespeare had started to amass as early as the 1590s came from his share in the profits of his company rather than from his plays. For Shakespeare’s contemporary playwrights, the situation must have been altogether different. Henslowe’s diary and his other papers yield a good picture of the pressures and constraints under which the playwrights employed by him worked. The series of payments of ten or twenty shillings paid to playwrights such as Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, John Day, William Haughton, Samuel Rowley, Anthony Munday, Michael Drayton, and Robert Wilson bespeaks people in immediate need of the money they earn by writing plays. The extant letters written from Robert Daborne to Henslowe in 1613 show the playwright repeatedly begging for further installments in partial payment of the (now lost) play *Machiavel and the Devil* which he is in the process of composing.⁵⁸ While the original agreement stipulates that Henslowe is to pay 6 pounds in advance, 4 pounds upon completion of three acts and a final payment of 10 pounds “vpon delivery in of y^e last scean perfited,” Henslowe ends up making several small advance payments to meet Daborne’s immediate needs. Dated April 17, 1613, the agreement dictates that the playwright “shall before y^e end of this Easter Term deliver in his Tragoedy,” an extremely tight schedule which Daborne fails to meet.⁵⁹ All in all, Henslowe’s diary and papers give evidence of a tightly run business in which playwrights would have neither the time nor the financial resources to produce more than was necessary. Nor does Henslowe seem to have been willing to pay for more than was

⁵⁷ In a Folger Institute Seminar taught by her at the Folger Shakespeare Library in spring 2001. Deborah Payne Fisk has suggested that something similar may apply to Dryden, who appears to have written inventive, daring and, consequently, partly unsuccessful plays while he was a shareholder. Once he had sold his share and consequently depended upon the play’s commercial success for his profit, he seems to have become more anxious to please the crowds (see “Betwixt Two Ages Cast’: Theatrical Dryden,” in *Enchanted Ground: Reimagining John Dryden*, eds. Jayne Lewis and Maximilian E. Novak (University of Toronto Press, 2004), 226–43).

⁵⁸ W. W. Greg, ed., *Henslowe Papers: Being Documents Supplementary to Henslowe’s Diary* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1907), 67–83.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

necessary. That many of Shakespeare's plays are of a length that exceeds those of his contemporaries (Ben Jonson excepted) may well have much to do with the different material situations within which they operated. I will argue that Shakespeare, "privileged playwright" that he was, could afford to write plays for the stage *and* the page.

Considering the current climate in Shakespeare studies, this study advances its case for a "literary Shakespeare" in the hope that it may constitute a timely intervention. Since the inception of the "Shakespeare revolution" which J. L. Styan, in 1977, both diagnosed and accelerated with the book of that title, performance has become a central component of Shakespeare studies.⁶⁰ Publications in the last two decades make this abundantly clear. Multi-volume editions such as the Arden (third generation), the New Cambridge or the Oxford have been giving ample space to the theatrical dimension as evidenced not only in copious stage histories but, increasingly, throughout the introduction and the annotations. The longest part of R. A. Foakes's excellent introduction to his Arden *King Lear*, for instance, is about "Reading and Staging *King Lear*."⁶¹ To give another example, Ernst Honigmann, in his introduction to the Arden *Othello*, raises a series of questions any director of the play may want to address, and he allows his own response to the play to be informed by its stage history. Accordingly, where Honigmann engages in character criticism, it is not so much to offer an interpretation as to show how that character can be and has been played and understood.⁶² In contrast, most volumes of the previous Arden generation did not even include stage histories. Other recent series such as the Globe Quartos, the Arden Shakespeare Playgoer's series and the Arden Shakespeare at Stratford series specifically target the theatrically interested reader.⁶³ The aim of the "Shakespeare in Production" series of Cambridge University Press is to offer "the fullest possible stage histories of individual Shakespearean texts,"⁶⁴ while the "Shakespeare in Performance" series of

⁶⁰ J. L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁶¹ R. A. Foakes, ed., *King Lear*, The Arden Shakespeare (Walton-on-Thames, Surrey: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

⁶² E. A. J. Honigmann, ed., *Othello*, The Arden Shakespeare (Walton-on-Thames, Surrey: Thomas Nelson, 1997).

⁶³ The Globe Quartos series, published by Nick Hern and Theatre Arts Books/Routledge in association with Globe Education, makes available non-Shakespearean plays of which there have been performances or staged readings at the New Globe in London.

⁶⁴ The general editors of the "Shakespeare in Production" series are J. S. Bratton and Julie Hankey. The words I quote appear on page iv of the various volumes.

Manchester University Press wants to assist performance criticism “by describing how certain of Shakespeare’s texts have been realised in production.”⁶⁵ Shakespeare journals have also registered and participated in the theatrical turn. In the late 1970s, *Shakespeare Quarterly* started publishing theatre reviews, and the early eighties saw the beginning of the heavily theater-oriented *Bulletin of the New York Shakespeare [sic] Society*, later renamed *Shakespeare Bulletin: A Journal of Performance Criticism and Scholarship*. Philip Brockbank, Russell Jackson, and Robert Smallwood have given a voice to “Players of Shakespeare.”⁶⁶ Others, like Barbara Hodgdon and William Worthen, have brought greater theoretical sophistication to performance studies.⁶⁷ A great number of monographs have also contributed their share to the field, as have various collections, for instance Philip C. McGuire and David A. Samuelson’s *Shakespeare, the Theatrical Dimension* or, more recently, Lois Potter and Arthur F. Kinney’s *Shakespeare, Text and Theater*, Grace Ioppolo’s *Shakespeare Performed*, and a New Casebooks volume on *Shakespeare in Performance*.⁶⁸ The same applies, more generally, to the work of such critics as Bernard Beckerman, John Russell Brown, H. R. Coursen, Alan Dessen, Jay L. Halio and Marvin Rosenberg, to name only a few.

Mentioning these various instances of Shakespearean performance criticism since the late 1970s, I do no more than scratch the surface of what is perhaps the most important development in Shakespeare studies of the last century, and this without addressing the rapidly expanding field of Shakespeare on film, a powerful offshoot of the “Shakespeare revolution.”

⁶⁵ Margaret Shewring, *King Richard II*, Shakespeare in Performance (Manchester University Press, 1996), xi. Some twenty volumes have appeared in this series since 1984. The general editors are J. R. Mulryne and J. C. Bulman.

⁶⁶ *Players of Shakespeare: Essays in Shakespearian Performance by Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company*, ed. Philip Brockbank (Cambridge University Press, 1985); *Players of Shakespeare 2, 3: Further Essays in Shakespearian Performance by Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company*, ed. Russell Jackson and Robert Smallwood (Cambridge University Press, 1988, 1993); and *Players of Shakespeare 4: Further Essays in Shakespearian Performance by Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company*, ed. Robert Smallwood (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁶⁷ Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); William B. Worthen, “Deeper Meanings and Theatrical Technique: The Rhetoric of Performance Criticism,” *Shakespeare Criticism*, 40 (1989), 441–55, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), and “Drama, Performativity, and Performance,” *PMLA*, 113 (1998), 1093–107.

⁶⁸ Philip C. McGuire and David A. Samuelson, eds., *Shakespeare, the Theatrical Dimension* (New York: AMS Press, 1979); Lois Potter and Arthur F. Kinney, eds., *Shakespeare, Text and Theater: Essays in Honor of Jay L. Halio* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1999); Grace Ioppolo, ed., *Shakespeare Performed: Essays in Honor of R. A. Foakes* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 2000); Robert Shaughnessy, ed., *Shakespeare in Performance*, New Casebooks (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

While Styan could write in 1977 that, “The call for a stage-centred study of Shakespeare” has not been “fully answered,” this no longer holds true today.⁶⁹

The greatest part of performance-oriented Shakespeare criticism has been salutary and beneficial, and this book has no quarrel with it. What does need to be questioned, however, are some of the more dogmatic claims that have been made about the importance of performance for our understanding of Shakespeare’s plays. When performance critics claim, for instance, that “the stage expanding before an audience is the source of all valid discovery” and that “Shakespeare speaks, if anywhere, through his medium,” they are simply ignoring one of the two media in which Shakespeare’s plays exist and existed.⁷⁰ Statements such as “These plays were scripts originally, and remain so today” or “A play has to be seen and heard in order to be understood” also miss part of a more complex truth.⁷¹ Trying to justify his opinion that Shakespeare’s plays need to be approached as scripts, H. R. Coursen writes: “A script involves a process and is not, like ‘literature,’ a finished product. As R. B. McKerrow says, a Shakespearean ‘manuscript . . . was not a literary document at all. It was merely the barebones of a performance on the stage, intended to be interpreted by actors skilled in their craft.’”⁷² McKerrow was correct, but Coursen is not. For a Shakespeare play has come down to us not in the form of a manuscript but as a printed play which stationers considered enough of a finished product to believe in its commercial viability.

Similarly, some performance critics have approved of and promoted the view of what Styan calls “text-as-score.”⁷³ The analogy with music may be tempting, but it is also false. For, while musical scores are usually intended for performers, a printed play generally is not, but is (and was) meant for readers instead. In fact, when “Stage-centred criticism . . . does not admit critical opinion as fully valid without reference to the physical circumstances of the medium,”⁷⁴ it imposes upon itself a disabling restriction that cannot

⁶⁹ Styan, *Shakespeare Revolution*, 6.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 235. In the passage from which I quote, Styan is paraphrasing and agreeing with John Russell Brown. For those who feel that *The Shakespeare Revolution* is a dated study by now, it may be well to quote from Styan’s more recent *Perspectives on Shakespeare in Performance* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000) to show that the rhetoric has not much changed: “we must allow Shakespeare himself to decide what must be studied. Throw out those learned introductions to the text. We are to learn by doing, and the insights of actors are more likely to be right than those of scholars” (17).

⁷¹ H. R. Coursen, *Reading Shakespeare on Stage* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1995), 46; John Russell Brown, *William Shakespeare: Writing for Performance* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), viii.

⁷² Coursen, *Reading Shakespeare on Stage*, 45. ⁷³ Styan, *Shakespeare Revolution*, 235. ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

be justified by how plays existed in Shakespeare's lifetime nor, I will argue, by how Shakespeare intended them to exist.

In his commendatory poem to his collaborator John Fletcher prefacing their *Faithful Shepherdess* (n.d., c. 1610), Francis Beaumont refers to the printed play as a "second publication" which allows readers to become aware that the playtext is with "much wit and art adorn'd."⁷⁵ Shakespeare and his contemporaries were aware that, as John Marston put it, "the life of these things consists in action," but they also realized that reading a play allowed valuable insights into other, more literary, aspects of their art.⁷⁶ The same applies to the reception of Shakespeare's plays today. R. A. Foakes has summed up this debate with concision and lucidity: "Plays have a double life, in the mind as read, and on the stage as acted; reading a play and seeing it acted are two different but equally valid and valuable experiences."⁷⁷

If we have erred in the last thirty years or so, we have erred on the side of performance and at the expense of the text. While the New Critical obsession with close readings that turned plays into poems needed a corrective, this corrective may have led some to consider Shakespeare's plays exclusively as scripts to be performed, a view that is not justified by the double existence these plays had in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It may be time, that is, for the pendulum to swing back, not to return us to the days of New Criticism, nor to undo the beneficial work undertaken by performance critics. Rather, our work may profit from an increased awareness of the fact that, from the very beginning, the English Renaissance plays we study had a double existence, one on stage and one on the printed page.

This recognition would call for a reception that takes into account the respective specificities of the two media. To simplify matters, performance tends to speak to the senses, while a printed text activates the intellect. As I will attempt to demonstrate in the second part of this study, some of the Shakespearean playbooks bear signs of the medium for which they were designed. For instance, the long texts of plays such as *Hamlet* (Q2, 1604 and Folio, 1623) and *Henry V* (Folio 1623), I will argue, tend to function according to a "literary" logic, while the short texts of the same plays (*Hamlet* Q1, 1603; *Henry V*, Q1, 1600) reflect their oral, theatrical provenance.

⁷⁵ Fredson Bowers, gen. ed., *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, 10 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1966–96), III.491. Etymologically, "to publish" derives, of course, from "making public" – see the *OED*.

⁷⁶ I quote from the prefatory address "To my equall Reader," Q1 *Parasitaster, or The Fawn* (1606), A2^v.

⁷⁷ Foakes, ed., *King Lear*, 4. See also Richard Levin, "Performance Critics vs Close Readers in the Study of English Renaissance Drama," *Modern Language Review*, 81 (1986), 545–59.

Such a view might go some way toward explaining the aversion to performed Shakespeare on the part of many Romantic critics and poets, an aversion which, fortunately, few with a real interest in Shakespeare would share today. Nevertheless, several of their comments about the stage suitability of some of Shakespeare's plays may be more to the point than we have been willing to grant. For instance, in his essay "On the Tragedies of Shakspeare [*sic*], Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation," Charles Lamb wrote: "I cannot help being of opinion that the plays of Shakspeare are less calculated for performance on a stage, than those of almost any other dramatist whatever."⁷⁸ Goethe, similarly, called Shakespeare's plays "more epic and philosophic – than dramatic."⁷⁹ Two centuries later, we are likely to disagree. Yet, in fairness to Lamb, Goethe and their contemporaries, it should be remembered that their Shakespeare was essentially the writer of the great tragedies, of *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*, of extremely long plays, that is, whose "original copy" is very likely to contain substantially more than what would have been performed by Shakespeare and his fellows. Lamb and Goethe may have been right insofar as several of the versions that have come down to us were in fact intended for the page.

In a recent book on Shakespeare's language, Frank Kermode points out that "the fact that [Shakespeare] was a poet has somehow dropped out of consideration." Objecting to today's "commonplace that only in performance can the sense of Shakespeare's plays be fully apprehended," Kermode writes: "Members of an audience cannot stop the actors and puzzle over some difficult expression, as they can when reading the play. The action sweeps you past the crux, which is at once forgotten because you need to keep up with what is being said, not lose the plot by meditating on what has passed. Following the story, understanding the tensions between characters, is not quite the same thing as following all or even most of the meanings."⁸⁰ While it is not the purpose of this study to probe into the complexity of Shakespeare's language, my book does go some way toward justifying such an approach, suggesting that a close, "readerly," attention to the play's text is not a modern aberration.

While Kermode's vindication is only incidental to his study of Shakespeare's language, the case for the "writtenness" of Shakespeare's

⁷⁸ *Lamb's Criticism*, ed. E. M. W. Tillyard (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1923), 37.

⁷⁹ "[M]ehr episch und philosophisch – als dramatisch" (diary entry of September 21, 1815, in *Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche, Sämtliche Werke*, 40 vols. (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1986), xxxiv.515).

⁸⁰ Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), vii, 3, 4, 5.

texts has been fully argued by Harry Berger, Jr. Having the courage to “state the case against the stage-centered approach,” Berger, like Kermode, is very much swimming against the current today.⁸¹ Berger’s writings raise the important question, left unanswered by much performance criticism, of how to deal with “a text which is overwritten from the standpoint of performance and the playgoer’s limited perceptual capacities.”⁸² Berger’s eloquent and sophisticated defense of a readerly approach to Shakespeare would be even stronger, however, if he were less willing to throw history overboard:

Perhaps Harriett Hawkins is right to insist that Shakespeare “showed no interest in publishing the text,” or perhaps, if the text was company property, he wasn’t able to publish it . . . Perhaps he did expect that at some point readers would be able to “study the script,” to “read – and re-read – it to ponder its subtleties.” Or perhaps not . . . I think the rules of the game change when the Age of Reading makes the plays available in the same medium as the sonnets.⁸³

When Shakespeare’s sonnets were published, the majority of the plays Shakespeare had written up to that date *were* available in print. Consequently, Shakespeare did not only expect that at some point in the future people would “read – and re-read” his plays. He could not help knowing that his plays were being read and reread, printed and reprinted, excerpted and anthologized as he was writing more plays. Not only “the Age of Reading” but also Shakespeare’s friends and fellow actors John Heminge and Henry Condell recommended that we “Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe.”⁸⁴ As for the beliefs that Shakespeare “showed no interest in publishing the text” or “wasn’t able to publish it,” I will show in [chapter 3](#) on what slender foundations this time-honored assumption has been built. One of the aims of this study is thus to provide a historicist dimension to Harry Berger’s Shakespeare who “knows how to write successful plays while still indulging his indomitable zest for literary *jouissance*, and, like many other authors, takes pride in that double accomplishment.”⁸⁵

⁸¹ Harry Berger, Jr., *Making Trifles of Terrors: Redistributing Complicities in Shakespeare*, ed. Peter Erickson (Stanford University Press, 1997), 100.

⁸² Harry Berger, Jr., *Imaginary Audition: Shakespeare on Stage and Page* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 29–30.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁴ I quote from Heminge and Condell’s address “To the Great Variety of Readers,” in the 1623 Folio edition of *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (A3¹), commonly referred to as “the First Folio.”

⁸⁵ Berger, *Imaginary Audition*, 18.

Chapter 1 investigates the publication of printed playbooks during Shakespeare's lifetime. I argue that printed playbooks became respectable reading matter earlier than we have hitherto supposed, early enough for Shakespeare to have lived through and to have been affected by this process of legitimation. **Chapter 2** examines how Shakespeare became "Shakespeare," a dramatic author whose name was counted upon to sell books and whose plays began being excerpted in anthologies next to passages from Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and other literary masterpieces as early as 1600.

While **chapters 1** and **2** locate the primary agency for the legitimation of printed drama and the emergence of the "Shakespeare" label in St. Paul's Churchyard, **chapter 3** turns to Shakespeare himself. Drawing on recent work by Peter Blayney, I argue that the assumption of Shakespeare's indifference to the publication of his plays is a myth. Scholars have often taken for granted that the playing companies and Shakespeare were basically opposed to the publication of their plays. Those plays that were published during Shakespeare's lifetime have thus generally been accounted for as alleged "breaches" such as the need for cash during a period of plague. More economic reasoning can account for the publication history of Shakespeare's plays if we assume that, after joining the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1594, Shakespeare and his fellows had a coherent strategy of trying to get his plays published approximately two years after they first reached the stage. The following chapters complement this argument by focusing on the publication history of Shakespeare's plays after his company had become the King's Men (**chapter 4**), and by addressing some of the documents that have traditionally been taken to imply the players' opposition to print (**chapter 5**).

Chapter 6 argues that Shakespeare's interest in a readership may account for the fact that he – "privileged playwright" that he was – wrote a significant number of plays that are considerably too long ever to have been performed in anything close to their entirety. In the light of this thesis, I examine a variety of dramatic documents including the plays of Shakespeare, of his contemporaries, and of his successors Beaumont and Fletcher, the extant manuscript plays, and Restoration players' quartos and promptbooks. **Chapter 7** investigates the implications this argument has for modern editorial practices, particularly of Shakespeare's plays. Specifically, I subject to scrutiny the groundbreaking Oxford Shakespeare edition, which took as its project the alleged recovery "of Shakespeare's plays as they were acted in the London playhouses." I suggest that, rather than presenting the plays as they would have been performed in Shakespeare's time, such an

editorial practice actually recovers confluences of theatrical scripts and reading texts.

In chapters 8 and 9, I turn to the three plays Shakespeare wrote for the Lord Chamberlain's Men for which "long" and "short" versions are extant: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, and *Hamlet*. Drawing on recent revisionary work on the so-called "bad" quartos, I will argue that the short and long texts do not represent provincial and London versions, as is often argued, nor are they simply "good" and "bad," "authentic" and "corrupt" (chapter 8). Rather, I believe, they represent "literary" and "theatrical" versions whose respective distinctiveness allows us important insights into Shakespeare's theatrical *and* literary art (chapter 9).